



## Start Your Career at VA

# Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

**T**he Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is a great place to start a career. Read these answers to common questions and start thinking about how you can build a future with VA. Learn more at [www.mycareeratva.va.gov/students](http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov/students).

### *What is VA's mission?*

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

### *How does VA assist Veterans and their families?*

VA provides health care, employment, housing, and countless other benefits and services to 23 million Veterans and their families. As the second-largest Federal agency, VA has more than 315,000 employees nationwide working in architecture, finance, health care, human resources, information technology, and other areas.

### *How is VA structured?*

VA is made up of these three Administrations:

- The Veterans Health Administration—one of the largest, most technologically advanced health care systems in the United States—handles more than 60 million inpatient and outpatient visits each year at more than 1,400 sites in the United States and its territories.
- The Veterans Benefits Administration, with 57 regional offices nationwide, administers home loan guaranty, education, and insurance programs to millions of Veterans and their families each year.
- The National Cemetery Administration maintains 131 national cemeteries in 39 states (and Puerto Rico) as well 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Veterans, their spouses, and dependents are eligible for burial services.

### *Why should I start my career at VA?*

A career at VA enables you to thrive personally and professionally. Enter at the junior level and use the MyCareer@VA career mapping tool to plan your advancement to a senior position. If you have an advanced degree or its equivalent, choose from the many senior-level positions in your field. No matter your position, VA invests in your success, backing you with the tools, training, and support you need to meet and exceed your career goals.

At VA you'll also have the satisfaction of serving with and for our nation's Veterans and their families, including the more than 1 million Service members coming home in the next five years. You'll be challenged by your assignments and begin developing hands-on skills from day one. And you'll be able to balance work and life with generous vacation benefits and opportunities for flexible scheduling and telework.

### *What types of careers does VA offer?*

Whether your specialty is medicine, human capital, social work, information technology, or another area, there's a career at VA for you. VA has a mission-critical need for human resources specialists, technology professionals, mental health counselors, and occupational therapists. VA also must hire physical therapists, physicians, registered nurses, Veterans claims examiners, contractors, pharmacists, medical technologists, diagnostic radiologic technologists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, cemetery caretakers, and many others.

VA employees work in these and many other areas:

- Health care, providing Veterans with physicals, dental care, physical and occupational therapy, counseling, nutrition advice, and nursing services

- Benefits administration, providing home loan services and benefits counseling
- Capital and facilities maintenance, designing and managing buildings, and maintaining the cemeteries of the fallen
- Human resources, providing leadership on human capital management, offering career advice, and supporting employee advancement
- Direct support finding housing for homeless Veterans and referring them to educational, legal, and many other services

### *I am a Veteran and am thinking about working at VA. Does VA have programs to help Veterans like me get hired?*

VA offers Veterans the opportunity to give back to fellow military Veterans and work with them every day. And with a unique appreciation for Veterans' distinct capabilities, VA wants to hire and support Veterans throughout their careers. Like other Federal agencies, VA offers hiring preferences to many qualified Service members in transition, including those with a service-connected disability and other Veterans who have been honorably discharged. VA programs like VetSuccess ([www.vetsuccess.gov](http://www.vetsuccess.gov)) and VA for Vets (<http://vaforvets.va.gov/pages/default.aspx>) will help you apply for VA and other jobs and transition to a civilian career. Learn more about Veteran hiring preferences at [www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref). And you can still serve if you work at VA: We provide National Guard and Active Reserve members with extra leave to perform service obligations.

### *How does VA accommodate people with disabilities?*

VA gives you the tools and accommodations to succeed. If you require an interpreter or an ergonomic chair, your supervisor can purchase what you need and get reimbursed from a unique, centralized fund managed by VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Accommodations to work from home or modify your schedule can be arranged. VA's policy is that everything—from staff meetings and trainings to conferences—must be made fully accessible.

### *Are VA salaries competitive?*

VA salaries are regionally competitive, with strong starting pay and regular increases. For many VA occupations, starting salaries and pay increases are set by professional boards and offered based on education, training, and experience.

### *What benefits does VA offer?*

VA benefits are amazing. As a full-time VA employee, you'll receive up to 26 vacation days, 10 Federal holidays, 13 sick days annually, and additional health-related leave options. Active Reserve and National Guard members receive an additional 15 days of leave for their service obligations. Your health care is covered by a Federal health insurance plan that comes with premium payment support. You get access to a flexible spending account for nonreimbursable health care expenses and to comprehensive group term life and long-term-care insurance. A secure retirement is assured with VA's three-tiered Federal Employees Retirement System, which helps you maximize Social Security, other basic benefits, and a tax-deferred savings plan.

### *May I gain VA work experience if I'm still in school?*

Yes, through the newly established Pathways program for students and recent graduates. Pathways is designed to provide students at various levels of education—from high school through graduate level—with opportunities to work in Federal agencies, explore Federal careers, and earn a salary for the work performed. Students who successfully complete the program may be eligible for a permanent job in the civil service.

### *Does VA offer tuition reimbursement?*

Tuition reimbursement is available to full-time VA employees who are enrolled in any accredited nursing degree program. Prerequisite courses required for acceptance into a degree program are also funded.

### *Does VA offer student loan repayment?*

The Student Loan Repayment Program offers eligible students a recruitment incentive of up to \$10,000 per year—or a maximum of \$60,000 per person—if you work at VA for at least three years.

### *I am planning a family. Will VA help me support my family?*

If your total family income does not exceed \$59,999 and if you are otherwise qualified, VA's Child Care Subsidy Program will pay up to 45 percent of your total child care costs.

### *What flexibilities does VA provide to help me balance work and life?*

A VA career affords a balance between work and life in a family-friendly environment. Flexible schedules and telework options let you build a work schedule that fits your lifestyle. Health and wellness programs such as Wellness Is Now encourage everyone at VA to stay healthy, active, and fit and strike a balance between work and home life.

### *What career advancement opportunities are there at VA?*

VA wants you to not only start your career at VA, but complete your career here, too. VA invests in our people through our ADVANCE workforce development initiative and VA Learning University, where you can go to improve your skills, boost occupational proficiencies, and move up in your career. Use MyCareer@VA's ([www.mycareeratva.va.gov](http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov)) extensive career guides to enter VA in a job that interests you. Access the program's job mapping tools to advance in your field and thrive professionally at every level in your VA career.

### *Is it difficult to get hired at VA?*

It is easier than ever for Veterans and non-Veterans alike to get hired at VA. Qualifying Veterans get fast-track access to Federal appointments. College students, recent graduates, and new recipients of advanced degrees get accelerated access to Federal internships and employment opportunities through the new Pathways program ([www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads](http://www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads)). Other new rules simplify the job application process for students and others pursuing Federal careers.

### *How does the Pathways program assist job applicants?*

This new government-wide initiative requires Federal agencies such as VA to do more to recruit students and recent graduates for Federal Government positions, internships, and fellowships. To find open opportunities through Pathways, visit [www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads](http://www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads).

### *How long does it take to get hired at VA?*

VA is undergoing an extensive effort to cut hiring red tape. VA is reducing the time it takes to process applications to less than 60 days. If you're a Veteran or a recent college graduate, VA uses preference and career retention programs to get you quickly started in your VA career and flourish once you're hired.

### *Are there VA facilities near me?*

VA facilities are located nationwide. VA's three main Administrations—the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration—are in more than 1,700 locations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. Use this interactive map to locate a VA



office near you [www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1).

### *How do I apply for a job at VA?*

Locating and applying for a VA job is simple. Visit [www.va.gov/jobs](http://www.va.gov/jobs) to explore free career advice, hiring preference programs, internships, and other information about VA careers. Then go to USAJobs ([www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov)) to search all VA employment opportunities. While there, set up an online account, submit your job application, and check the status of the application. You'll find hints and more FAQs to guide you through the process.

### *If I am a person with a disability, how do I apply for a job at VA?*

When applying for a job at VA, you never have to reveal that you have a disability. But if you opt to do so, you may be able to apply under the Schedule A fast-track hiring program. People with disabilities may search for VA jobs at USAJobs, but are not required to apply through that site. If you find a job you'd like to apply for, email the contact person listed at the bottom of the job announcement and attach your résumé and Schedule A letter. Or contact the selective placement coordinator in your chosen area to submit a formal application for the job you want. Find your area coordinator and learn much more at [www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx).

### *Where can I get more information?*

Visit [www.mycareeratva.va.gov/students](http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov/students) for details.

**VA is an equal opportunity employer | Hiring Veterans and non-Veterans**

